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Amendments to the Claims:

a 1. (currently amended) A comb polymer that is water-soluble, or water-dispersible, or both, comprising a polymer main chain and polyester side-arms which contain ~~sulphone~~ sulfonic acid groups and are linked to said polymer main chain via ester groups, which side-arms have been at least partially neutralized by sodium and lithium counterions, wherein the molar ratio of lithium to sodium is between 0.1 and 50.

2. (original) The comb polymer according to Claim 1, wherein the molar ratio of lithium to sodium is between 0.5 and 25.

3. (currently amended) The comb polymer according to Claim 1, wherein the comb polymer [polymer main chain] comprises at least one polymer selected from the group consisting of polymeric aliphatic, cycloaliphatic and aromatic polycarboxylic acids polymers and derivatives thereof.

4. (currently amended) The comb polymer according to Claim 3, wherein the polymeric aliphatic, cycloaliphatic and aromatic polycarboxylic acids polymers and derivatives thereof comprise at least one polymer selected from the group consisting of polyacrylic acid, polymethacrylic acid, esters of polyacrylic acid, ~~or~~ esters of polymethylacrylic acid [with at least one C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>22</sub> aliphatic, cycloaliphatic or aromatic alcohol], polymaleic acid, polymaleic anhydride, polyfumaric acid or and polynorbornenic acid.

5. (cancelled)

6. (currently amended) The comb polymer according to Claim 5 ~~23~~, wherein p and o are selected so that the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 2000 and 100,000 g/mol.

7. (currently amended) The comb polymer according to Claim 5 ~~28~~, wherein said one or more additional counterions of R<sup>1</sup> are selected from the group consisting of potassium,

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magnesium, calcium, ammonium, monoalkylammonium, dialkylammonium, trialkylammonium and tetraalkylammonium, wherein the alkyl positions of the ~~amines~~ ammoniums, independently of one another, comprise a C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>22</sub>-alkyl radical and 0 to 3 hydroxyl groups.

8. (currently amended) The comb polymer according to Claim 5 28, wherein said mono- or polyethoxylated sulphonated organyl radicals bridged via ether functions of R<sup>2</sup> comprise a radical of the formula  $-(O-CH_2-CH_2)_s-SO_3R^1$ , wherein  $s \geq 1$  and is selected so that the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 200 and 2,000,000 g/mol.

9. (original) The comb polymer according to Claim 1, wherein the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 200 and 2,000,000 g/mol.

10. (original) The comb polymer according to Claim 9, wherein the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 2000 and 100,000 g/mol.

11. (original) The comb polymer according to Claim 10, wherein the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 1000 and 30,000 g/mol.

12. (original) The comb polymer according to Claim 11, wherein the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 5000 and 15,000 g/mol.

13. (cancelled)

14. (cancelled)

15. (cancelled)

16. (cancelled)

17. (cancelled)

18. (cancelled)

19. (cancelled)

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20. (cancelled)

21. (cancelled)

22. (cancelled)

23. (cancelled)

24. (cancelled)

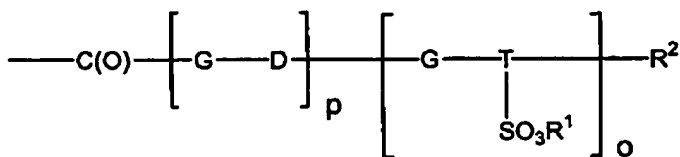
25. (cancelled)

26. (cancelled)

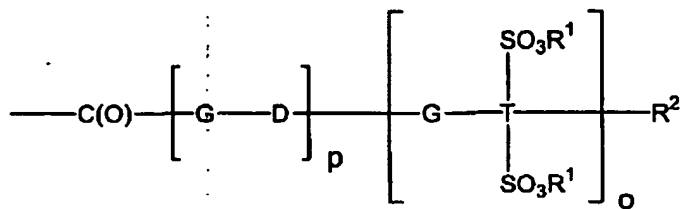
27. (cancelled)

Please add the following new claim:

28. (new) The comb polymer according to Claim 1, wherein the polyester side arms comprise at least one polyester selected from the group consisting of:



Formula I



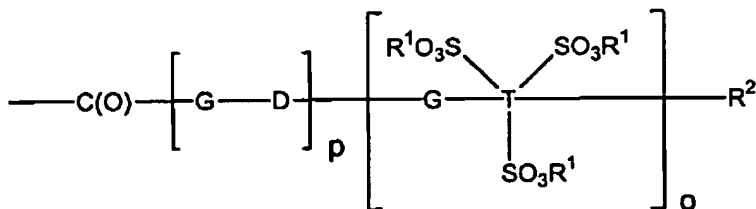
Formula II

and

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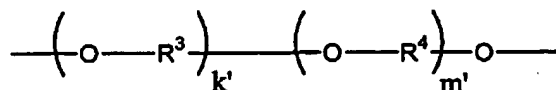


Formula III

wherein:

p and o are selected so that the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 200 and 2,000,000 g/mol;

G is selected from the group consisting of C<sub>2</sub> to C<sub>22</sub> aromatic, aliphatic and cycloaliphatic organyl units containing at least two terminal oxygen atoms and derivatives of a polyglycol of the formula HO-[R<sup>3</sup>-O]<sub>k</sub>-[R<sup>4</sup>-O]<sub>m</sub>-H, corresponding to an organyl unit



wherein R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are each C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>22</sub> alkylene radicals, and are the same or different and k'+m' ≥ 1, wherein k' and m' are selected so that the average molecular weight of the comb polymer is between 200 and 2,000,000 g/mol;

D is selected from the group consisting of C<sub>2</sub> to C<sub>22</sub> aromatic, aliphatic and cycloaliphatic organyl units containing at least two terminal acyl groups;

T is selected from the group consisting of sulphonated aromatic, aliphatic and cycloaliphatic organyl radicals containing at least two terminal acyl groups;

at least some of said R<sup>1</sup> are lithium and sodium counterions, and optionally at least some of said R<sup>1</sup> are counterions different from lithium and sodium counterions; and

R<sup>2</sup> is selected from the group consisting of:

- aromatic, aliphatic and cycloaliphatic amino functional radicals including a

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-NH-R<sup>5</sup> or -NR<sup>5</sup><sub>2</sub> group, wherein R<sup>5</sup> is selected from the group consisting of C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>22</sub> alkyl and aryl radicals;

- aromatic, aliphatic and cycloaliphatic radicals including a -C(OR)<sup>6</sup> group, wherein R<sup>6</sup> is selected from the group consisting of C<sub>1</sub> to C<sub>200</sub> alkyl and aryl radicals;

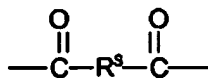
- aromatic, aliphatic and cycloaliphatic organyl radicals bridged via ether functions -O-R<sup>5</sup>, wherein R<sup>5</sup> is the same as defined above;

- polyalkoxy compounds bridged via ether functions of the formula -O-[R<sup>7</sup>-O]<sub>q</sub>-[R<sup>8</sup>-O]<sub>r</sub>-Y, wherein R<sup>7</sup> and R<sup>8</sup> are each independently selected from the group consisting of C<sub>2</sub> to C<sub>22</sub> alkyl radicals and are the same or different, Y is hydrogen or a C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>22</sub> aliphatic radical, and q+r ≥ 1; and

- mono- or polyethoxylated sulphonated organyl radicals bridged via ether functions, and alkali metal or alkaline earth metal salts thereof.

29. (new) The comb polymer according to Claim 4, wherein the esters of polyacrylic acid and esters of polymethylacrylic acid comprise esters of polyacrylic acid and esters of polymethylacrylic acid with at least one C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>22</sub> aliphatic, cycloaliphatic or aromatic alcohol.

30. (new) The comb polymer according to Claim 27, wherein D comprises a combination of two or more different acid components comprising an organyl unit of the formula



wherein R<sup>s</sup> is selected from C<sub>2</sub> to C<sub>22</sub> aromatic and linear or cyclic, saturated or unsaturated aliphatic bifunctional radicals.